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WORK IN ANTHROPOLOGY

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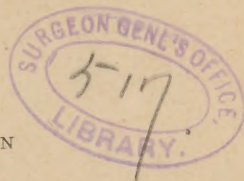
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

FOR THE YEAR 1892

By HARLAN I. SMITH

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The antiquity of man, the origin of types and varieties, the rise of civilization and the progress of society, the beginning and development of art, language, government and religion, and the position of the human family, are all questions to which the anthropologists of Europe and America are now giving attention; and anthropology, so far from being another burden added to the list of studies is, on the contrary, a help. All studies are made more easy by obtaining a clear understanding of their origin, history, and the relation which they must bear to the welfare of man. Besides, anthropological study tends to develop a liberality of feeling and a strong respect for the customs and religions of other peoples.

Eastern educational institutions are already engaged in the work. Some have even made valuable contributions to the knowledge and literature of the subject. The Peabody Museum at Cambridge has for years encouraged the study of American Antiquities, until, beginning with the college year of '90-91, a regular course

in American Archæology and Ethnology was established there in connection with Harvard University. This course extends over three years, and is under the charge of Professor F. W. Putnam, curator of the museum. Students in the course are required to do both museum and field work in addition to the regular studies pursued in the department. This institution, which gives not only very great advantages in access to one of the most complete archæological and ethnological collections this side of the Atlantic, but also in a thorough course of study, in connection with them, is by all means one of the very first in the work.

Yale, Clark, Vermont, Brown, and Union College offer facilities for anthropological study, and only a little more than two years ago the University of Pennsylvania established a Museum of American Archæology, of which Dr. C. C. Abbott was appointed Curator. Johns Hopkins is now looking into the matter with no small degree of interest. The National Museum and Smithsonian Institution, at Washington, have for years offered great opportunities, in their departments of prehistoric anthropology, to the earnest student or specialist from any part of the world.

The eastern institutions have taken the lead, but now the University of Chicago offers a series of courses in anthropology under the direction of Professor Frederick Starr. These are preparatory to, and a part of the work in Social Science. It is now understood that a large Anthropological Museum will be founded in Chicago,

to which will be taken all of the ethnological and archæological material collected for the great exposition, and where special work of investigation will be carried on in addition to instruction similar to that given at the Chicago University.

For the University of Michigan to be behindhand, would be unusual, and in the second semester of the college year 1891-92, before the University of Chicago opened its doors, the University of Michigan offered its first work in anthropology. This was a course in museum laboratory work in American Archæology. This branch of anthropological work is of unusual interest to the students from the central basin of this country, as that locality is very rich in prehistoric remains. Two students availed themselves of this course. In addition to the investigations which they carried on for themselves, considerable work was done for the museum. In the west end of the lower hall of that building, two large wall cases were constructed for exhibiting such collections as were thought to be of interest to the general public. A room in the museum was secured as an anthropological laboratory, and to this room were taken all of the materials belonging to the department, which had not previously been arranged for exhibition. Those collections on exhibition were left in the cases not to be removed, unless required for special study, until the other materials were placed in proper shape. The University library loaned to this laboratory such books as were required for use in con-

nection with the work to be carried on there, and various materials required for immediate work were obtained.

Upon examination, after the specimens had been brought together, it was found that the University was in possession of a much more valuable collection than was generally supposed. One of the most interesting and instructive features of the collection is a typical lot of about forty authentic neolithic implements from Denmark. These implements were presented by a Philadelphia gentleman, and the series includes a number of celts or chisels, several saw-like objects, scrapers, knives, hammer-stones, and in fact representative specimens of all the more plentiful stone implements used by neolithic man in Denmark. All these specimens are beautifully chipped, while some are ground. The material of which they are fashioned is the hard black flint, of which these people were so fond.

Among the materials illustrative of the ceramic art are more than a hundred ancient Peruvian vessels. These were collected by Dr. J. B. Steere, about 20 years ago, at Ancon and Pacasmayo; places once thickly populated by an ancient race and now well known because of the great number of mummies, earthen vessels, fabrics and other remains of the Inca nation to be found there. In this assortment are vessels of black, red, and yellow earthenware of many shapes. Nearly all of them are covered with figures representing plants and animals, while some have beautifully inter-

woven geometric designs impressed upon their surfaces. Some of the vessels have figured upon them quaint little dwarfs with a very peculiar head-dress and great circular ear-rings. Others have a series of these little men so arranged around the circumference as to suggest the representation of some historical event or ceremony. Some of the vessels are made in the exact form of the chirimoya, pecay and other plant products. Again there are those in the form of fish, dolphins, and the heads of monkeys. In fact this representation of the monkey is rather common. On one flask in particular a monkey is represented as if tied as a prisoner, while on the reverse of the flask the figure, otherwise similar, has a peculiar barbed tail and a long, protruding tongue, which suggests a demon or other religious symbol. (See p. 15). A number of the water jugs have a peculiar spout. A tube opening from one side of the spherical body extends in a semicircle over the vessel and opens into the other side. In the upper part of this semicircular tube the spout proper is inserted. This resembles the neck of an ordinary jug. At the junction of the spout with the semicircular tube, in most cases, a little monkey is figured as if climbing up the spout to get at the contents of the jug. The natives of Peru, to-day, use a similar water vessel which they carry at the belt suspended by means of the semicircular tube. Another form of water jar greatly resembles the old Greek forms with a conical base and beautifully curved outline. The vessels of this form are

often ornamented with geometric designs, many of which are very artistic.

The collection from the islands at the mouth of the Amazon, also secured by Dr. Steere, contains some great hat-shaped burial urns and several food vessels. Characteristic of these vessels are the incised lines, beautifully carved designs and representations of hideous human faces. From South America Dr. Steere sailed to the East Indies, where, in addition to the natural history collections, he obtained a series of more than 20 earthen vessels, including pots, pitchers, cups, vases and bowls. This collection was also placed under the charge of the anthropological department.

Over 50 of the pottery vessels, including some from each of the localities mentioned, were badly broken in transportation. This breakage was doubtless due to the scarcity of materials for packing. All of these fragmentary pots have been carefully restored, and at the same time experiments were made with various cements and compositions. The preparation finally determined upon is a mixture similar to that used at the Peabody Museum. It is composed of silicate of soda, whiting and various coloring materials, made up according to the use required, at the laboratory; and is now thought to be the best cement for such laboratory and museum purposes. It is very strong yet not too brittle, while the moisture in the atmosphere has little or no effect upon it. In the latter quality this silicate compound has a great advantage over glue. A number of

skulls which had been articulated were also restored with the same preparation.

Among the various skulls is one perforated cranium from Michigan, similar to those discovered in great numbers by Mr. Henry Gilman, near Detroit. The perforated skulls are numerous in some Michigan mounds, but are not often found in other parts of the United States. There is a limited assortment of stone implements from the surface in the vicinity of Ann Arbor. This collection includes chipped points from arrows, spears, knives, scrapers, and drills, or perforators; a few celts or chisels used also as axes, and perhaps sometimes for skinning game. There are also a few hammer-stones, about a dozen charm-stones, or ornaments, and an iron tomahawk. The latter is modern and was doubtless used by the Indians not more than 100 years ago. Such iron implements were often obtained by them from the French traders or Catholic Fathers. There is a number of stone hammers which were obtained by the late Dr. Winchell, from the prehistoric copper mines of the Superior region. Two large mortars, or dishes, one of sandstone and one of steatite, represent the Santa Barbara Islands off the coast of California. Through the efforts of one of the students a fund was subscribed with which a collection locally known as the DePue collection was purchased. This collection contains a series of stone implements from the vicinity of Ann Arbor which was collected by Mr. DePue.

Just before the close of the college year 1891-92 a fine series of 106 plaster casts was added to the collection. This series was presented to the University by the Smithsonian Institution, and comprises casts of some of the most rare as well as the most typical specimens which have been collected by the field assistants of that institution in the past fifty years. In the series are represented implements of war, domestic utensils, ornaments and ceremonial implements. All of these casts are of the best workmanship, and are coated with a dull pigment, so that they greatly resemble the real rock of the originals. With each class of objects is a card upon which is printed a brief description of the general or typical forms and of the use to which each was put as well as the age or ages in which it is classed. Besides these each cast is accompanied by a printed card label referring to the catalogue number at the National Museum, and giving the locality at which the specimen was found, as well as other data necessary to the full scientific label for such an object. The full system of labels is one of the most important parts of the gift. These casts were placed on exhibition in the new cases. The series is of great value to the University, and as it represents the best and most general forms which have been discovered in this country, it is by all means much better for general and elementary class work than any collection of specimens which could be amassed in this vicinity. A local collection, unless made by a trained field worker, seldom contains

a good synoptical representation, and is too often simply an aggregation of "relics" without the necessary data and hence without value for educational purposes. Dr. Ames several times made use of parts of the collection to illustrate his introductory lectures to the classes in history. By means of them he carried his class from the earliest times, when man first began to use flakes of stones to supplant his finger-nails and teeth, in the various labors to which the latter were not well fitted, down to the time when archaeology ends and history begins, to the time when man began to live in communities and to practice the various arts which we consider indicative of civilization.

Professor W. H. Sherzer recently presented to the museum several large stone hammers, or mauls, which he collected from the ancient copper pits or mines at Isle Royal, Michigan. These hammers were used by the primitive miners in obtaining some of the copper which is so widely distributed throughout the mounds of the whole Mississippi valley.

A series of implements collected by Professor J. C. Rolfe, at North Truro, Mass., was examined and some interesting observations were noted relating to the natural sand-blast and its action upon implements. The effect of the shifting sand and sand storms upon archaeological specimens has as yet been little studied. It is hoped some results may be obtained, from a further study of this series, that will lead to a better understanding of some of the perplexing questions with which archæologists have to deal.

During the spring several prehistoric village sites were discovered near Ann Arbor, and it is hoped that these may soon be thoroughly examined.

An extensive survey was made of one of the noted prehistoric "garden beds" near Kalamazoo. An exact contour map was constructed and a series of photographs were taken. It is expected that funds will soon be secured with which these interesting and characteristically Michigan remains may be thoroughly explored and that plaster models may be made of the "beds" as they were originally supposed to have been and as they now appear. Such models, together with the map, photographs and the specimens found during the excavation, would be of great value to science and also of a popular interest to the people of Michigan.

The great prehistoric remains of our State are fast disappearing as a result of the advance of civilization. The plow every year levels and obliterates more completely those earth-works which were once grand monuments. Railroads cut through them and towns are built over the very sites where once teemed a ruder civilization. All these agencies destroy or render inaccessible the facts which such places have to reveal to the student. It is therefore of the greatest importance that careful scientific examination be made of all such remains that are in danger of destruction, and that the results of such exploration be preserved for future study and comparison. It is from careful study and comparative methods only

that we may hope to learn of the early American races. Perhaps now that more interest is being exhibited in the work, steps may be taken to have the remains in Michigan preserved until surveys and explorations of the localities in danger may be made. Every earth-work, village site, workshop, mine and quarry ought to be surveyed, photographed and explored. This would require years of work, but the result would be most satisfactory. Very little work has been done in Michigan, and hence the field is comparatively undisturbed and in such condition that all the facts can be obtained without the confusion or misleading circumstances which the student has met in other localities.

The scientific work of anthropology which it is now desirable to do can be easily carried on and arranged for at the University in all the branches of study but this one. For that reason prehistoric anthropology has received almost the entire attention of this report. In that, we must have the coöperation of the land owners of the State. Let our plea not be in vain, for the preservation of all the archæological remains until proper exploration can be made by men properly trained and experienced in such work. Meanwhile, it is very desirable that collections of archæological specimens be made as rapidly as possible. As the time has come when a heterogeneous collection is of no value to science, the museum will be conducted on the basis that "an efficient educational museum is a collection of instructive labels, each illustrated by typical and well selected

specimens." Any object relating to prehistoric times, when authentic and accompanied by a label, and any information or reports in regard to mounds, earth-works, quarries, etc., will be gladly received. Detailed directions for labeling and sending will be given on application to Mr. H. C. Markham, University Museum, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The work of this laboratory and the outside exploration has been carried on by special subscription, the only expense to the University being the furnishing of space in the museum building.

